



2023 ADVOCACY REPORT

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
OUR ADVOCACY FOCUSES ON 5 KEY AREAS	4
ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS	6
MULTI-EMPLOYER BARGAINING	12
VOICE REFERENDUM	13
REPRESENTING MEMBERS AND THE SECTOR	14
WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS	15
BUILDING STRATEGIC GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIPS	16
COLLABORATION	17

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

CELA acknowledges all Traditional Custodians across Australia and recognises First Nations Peoples' connection to their lands, skies and waterways. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. Together we work towards a better future for all children, families and communities.



INTRODUCTION

CELA's advocacy places community and small providers of early education at the forefront.

2023 was a significant year for early childhood advocacy as both federal and state governments pressed forward on ambitious reform agendas.

Key federal reviews including The Productivity Commission Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care, The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Childcare Inquiry and the National Early Years Strategy, will shape the direction of policy in our sector for decades to come.

State governments are also pressing ahead with reform aimed at increasing access to preschool for 3 and 4 year olds.

- ▶ South Australian Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care, which made 43 recommendations around three-year-old preschool and market stewardship in the state.
- ▶ Queensland announced it will offer eligible-aged children 15 hours of free kindergarten per week from January 2024.
- ▶ Tasmanian Government budget inclusion of over \$6m to establish a trial of universal access to early learning for three-year-olds in the year before kindergarten.

- ▶ The ACT Government announced two years of funded preschool

Developments in NSW include:

- ▶ NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) Inquiry into early childhood education and care affordability, accessibility and consumer choice. CELA lodged a formal written submission and participated in face-to-face meetings.
- ▶ NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) Independent Market Monitoring Review provides data to assist the board of the Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund. CELA provided responses to the methodology paper released in September.

This is an incredibly exciting time and represents a real opportunity to build an early education and care (ECEC) sector that is fit for the future. CELA has been at the forefront of these consultations, continuing our advocacy agenda for a strong, sustainable and quality early childhood sector, with children's wellbeing and development at the centre.

OUR ADVOCACY FOCUSES ON 5 KEY AREAS



**ACHIEVING QUALITY
EARLY EDUCATION**



**BUILDING A STABLE
WORKFORCE THAT IS
NURTURED AND VALUED**



**ENSURING VIABILITY
FOR COMMUNITY AND
SMALL PROVIDERS**



**IMPROVING ACCESS FOR
VULNERABLE CHILDREN**



**CLOSING THE EDUCATIONAL
GAP FOR RURAL CHILDREN**



ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

CELA submits a pre-Budget submission to the Commonwealth Government, calling for government funded wage increases for the sector and support to build workforce capacity and professional identity.

CELA CEO hosts a forum between members and the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning, Sarah Mitchell ahead of the NSW State Election.

CELA CEO is one of three early education representatives invited to participate in the National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy Roundtable convened by Prime Minister & Cabinet.

CELA CEO makes a verbal submission to commissioners for the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care.

Labor wins Government in NSW and the Honourable Prue Car is sworn in as Deputy Premier and the Minister for Education and Early Learning.

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

CELA CEO joins peaks, unions and large providers of ECEC at the third Early Education Workforce Summit at Parliament House, convened by the United Workers Union, attended by Minister for Workplace Relations, Tony Burke.

CELA lodges its response to the ANZSO Consultation supporting more contemporary occupation names for early education and care classifications.

CELA visits Cloncurry, Queensland to review the undersupply of ECEC services.



Submissions are lodged for government inquiries and consultations:

- » Productivity Inquiry into ECEC
- » NSW IPART Consultation into ECEC Affordability, Accessibility and Consumer Choice
- » National Early Years Strategy
- » Select Senate Committee on the Cost of Living

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet releases a draft national strategy for the care and support economy.

CELA CEO meets with Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Youth Prue Car.

CELA completes and files joint witness statements and submissions with CCC to support the application for the Supported Bargaining Authorisation.

The ACCC releases its interim report in its child care inquiry. The initial findings include that child care fees have been increasing at a faster rate than inflation, up 20% over the past 4 years for centre-based care, while out of pocket costs for families have increased by 7%.

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

CELA, together with CCC, ACA and G8, lodges an application with the Fair Work Commission for the first ever national multi-employer agreement under the new Secure Jobs, Better Pay Act.

CELA CEO and team visit Huon Vally, Tasmania to review the undersupply of ECEC services.

Australian Bureau of Statistics proposes to replace names of occupations like "Child Care Worker" and "Child Care Centre Manager" with more contemporary titles such as "Early Childhood Educator" and "Children's Education and Care Service Director."

CELA presents evidence at the first hearing held for the ECEC Supported Bargaining Authorisation before the full bench of the Fair Work Commission.

The South Australian Royal Commission into early childhood education and care releases its final report, setting a 20-year goal to reduce the rate of SA children entering school developmentally vulnerable.

CELA CEO meets with Reserve Bank of Australia.

CELA CEO visits SA Eyre Peninsula, South Australia to address the impact of undersupply of service.

The Fair Work Commission approves the application by CELA, other peak bodies and unions for multi-employer bargaining in the long day care sector. This authorisation means negotiations can commence to establish the first ever national multi-employer agreement in the ECEC sector.

CELA CEO contributes to the Community Childcare Fund Restricted Grant Review (CCFR).

CELA CEO co-hosts multi-employer bargaining round table in Canberra, chaired by Senator Jess Walsh and attended by Minister Anne Aly.

CELA attends the NSW budget lock up ahead of the budget being handed down.

CELA CEO meets with Reserve Bank of Australia.

CELA CEO attends ACCC Roundtable.

CELA CEO attends CCCFR Review.

CELA CEO represents members at the third, fourth and fifth conference for the multi-employer bargaining process.

CELA CEO co-hosts joint Canberra lobby day and press conference, in collaboration with CCC, ACA and United Workers Union.

CELA CEO is a panellist on the Front Project Work and Play Report 2023.

CELA CEO attends ACECQA National Workforce Summit.

CELA submits a response to NSW IPART review of affordability, accessibility and consumer choice in ECEC

Productivity Commission Inquiry interim report released.

CELA CEO attends Apiary impact community convening.

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

CELA hosts NFP providers and peaks planning workshop with GoodStart Early Learning.

CELA and CCC submit a response to the ACCC 2023 Childcare Inquiry - September interim report.

CELA CEO attends IPART Public Hearing.

CELA submit a response to the IPART Independent Market Monitoring Review.

CELA attends ECA conference and cohosts a seminar with CCC on the multi-employer bargaining process.

CELA CEO represents members at the first and second conference for the multi-employer bargaining process.

CEO visits Coober Pedy to investigate market failure of ECEC services.

CELA AGM held.

CELA, CCC, ACA and UWU host ECEC Workforce Sector MEB information session for sector leaders.

CELA CEO represents members at the sixth and seventh multi-employer bargaining conference.



In addition, CELA CEO represented issues impacting community and small providers at:

119 FEDERAL AND STATE ADVISORY GROUP MEETINGS AND KEY INQUIRY CONSULTATIONS.



ADVOCACY
ON THE AGENDA

**3,000+ HOURS
OF ADVOCACY**

on behalf of CELA members

MULTI EMPLOYER BARGAINING 2023 IN PICTURES



JUN 23: MEB PRESS CONFERENCE

CELA's CEO Michele Carnegie spoke at a press conference with Tony Burke MP and David Smith MP about the opportunity that MEB provides to improve wages and solve staff shortages without increasing costs to parents.



JUL 23: NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

CELA CEO Michele Carnegie, Minister for Early Childhood Education the Hon Dr Anne Aly and CCC Executive Director Julie Price at the Federal Minister for Education's speech.



AUG 23: FAIR WORK COMMISSION

CELA's CEO Michele Carnegie in Melbourne at the Fair Work Commission hearing to kick start the process towards a properly remunerated workforce that can deliver even better outcomes for teachers, educators, children and their families.



SEP 23: FEDERAL PARLIAMENT ROUNDTABLE

CELA services and educators discussed the importance of solving workforce shortages through multi-employer bargaining with Minister Aly, Senators and MPs.





OCT 23: ECA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

CELA Director of Policy and Strategy Laura Stevens spoke about how the first ever national multi-employer bargaining process could be the key to delivering funded professional wages for early childhood educators and teachers and what it means for services.



OCT 23: FAIR WORK COMMISSION

Multi-employer bargaining negotiations commenced at the Fair Work Commission.



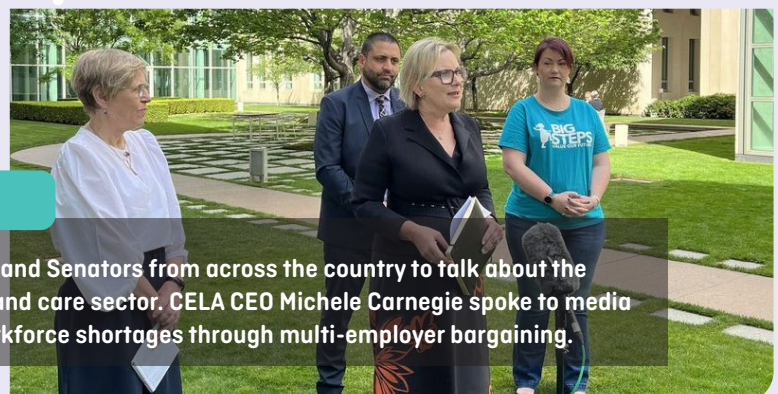
NOV 23: FAIR WORK COMMISSION

CELA CEO Michele Carnegie and CCC Executive Director Julie Price at the first multi-employer negotiation session attended by the Federal Government.



NOV 23: PARLIAMENT HOUSE ADVOCACY

CELA, CCC, UWU and sat down with Ministers, MPs and Senators from across the country to talk about the urgent need to raise wages in the early education and care sector. CELA CEO Michele Carnegie spoke to media about the urgent need to solve early education workforce shortages through multi-employer bargaining.





MULTI-EMPLOYER BARGAINING

Continued workforce shortages are a handbrake on the sector, our economy and means thousands of children and families are missing out on the early childhood services they need.

CELA has advocated for improved wages and conditions for early educators and teachers for many years. In 2023 we took the lead on the issue by acting as an employer representative as part of the first ever national multi-employer bargaining negotiations in the early childhood sector.

Following participation in sector workforce forums as well as direct consultations with members, CELA identified multi-employer bargaining, under the new Supported Bargaining stream, as the best opportunity to improve wages and solve staffing shortages without increasing costs to parents.

In June CELA, along with other ECEC employer representatives and early education Unions, made an application for a supported bargaining authorisation under new laws passed under the Secure Jobs, Better Pay legislation. CELA CEO Michele Carnegie promoted the lodgement of the application in a Canberra media conference alongside Minister for Industrial Relations Tony Burke.

These laws make it possible for services to pool resources and allow them to bargain together, but most importantly, these new laws can require the government, as primary funder of the sector, to also participate.

The application was approved in August and negotiations commenced in October. The parties are seeking a 25% funded pay increase to fix the professional wages gap between ECEC and other government funded

professional services such as aged care, disability care and school teaching.

CELA is further supporting this process through direct lobbying with Commonwealth Ministers, Senators and Members, to advocate for the urgency for delivering a funded pay increase to fix this unprecedented workforce crisis. CELA co-hosted a roundtable event with Community Child Care Association (CCC) at Parliament House in September, chaired by Senator Jess Walsh and attended by Minister for Early Education – Anne Aly. This was backed up by further intensive joint lobbying in November, in conjunction with Community Child Care, Australia Childcare Alliance and United Workers Union.

CELA's involvement in the multi-employer bargaining process has included:

- ▶ Direct member consultation and education through webinars
- ▶ Preparation of legal submissions and representation in formal Fair Work Commission proceedings
- ▶ Extensive written communication to members and the sector including explainers, weekly updates and background resources
- ▶ High level training provided to participating member services
- ▶ Collaboration and coordination with employer and union stakeholders
- ▶ Face to face consultations with government, departments and external authorities.
- ▶ Participation in formal negotiations within the Fair Work Commission



VOICE REFERENDUM

A referendum on whether to change the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament was announced by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese after winning government in May 2022.

In early 2023, CELA endorsed support for the referendum on a First Nations Voice to Parliament.

The referendum was held on 14 October and, unfortunately, was not successful.

In response to the result CELA released the following statement to members:

“Today and every day CELA stands in solidarity and respect with First Nations peoples.

We acknowledge that time is needed to grieve and regroup as we process the result of the referendum.

The referendum represented a promise to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that Australians would recognise and listen. Six million voters agreed but unfortunately, it was not enough. As we move forward together, we will put our energy and passion into advocating for alternative initiatives that can help to close the gap in access to quality early education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

We are deeply committed to supporting the sector in how to share the rich values, culture and true histories of First Nations peoples with children.

We know that the journey to justice is long, but that hope for healing and a stronger, more united country will be realised through the messages each of us pass on to the children in our lives.

As a peak body, we will continue to pursue better outcomes for First Nations children throughout Australia.”



SEP 23: FEDERAL PARLIAMENT ROUNDTABLE

CELA services and educators discussed the importance of solving workforce shortages through multi-employer bargaining with Minister Aly, Senators and MPs.

REPRESENTING MEMBERS AND THE SECTOR

Michele Carnegie, CELA CEO, undertakes a range of approaches on behalf of members, including:

- ▶ Meeting with State and Federal Ministers to explain issues and recommend solutions
- ▶ Liaising regularly with senior agency staff who brief and appraise State Ministers
- ▶ Reporting on important issues for the sector through our Amplify and Broadside publications
- ▶ Participating on federal and state advisory panels to represent the views of community and small providers
- ▶ Providing detailed submissions to important reviews such as the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care, the Early Years Strategy, and NSW IPART Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care Affordability, Accessibility and Consumer Choice.

To deliver effective advocacy, we constantly seek feedback and information by:

- ▶ Having frequent conversations with members
- ▶ Undertaking member surveys on specific issues
- ▶ Engaging with an advisory group comprised of members who represent the diversity of service types
- ▶ Gathering insights from the learning and development program, attended by several thousand educators annually
- ▶ Drawing on our collective CELA leadership expertise.

It was a year of focus on policy and reform and CELA's active representation was led by the CEO:

- ▶ Australian Government Early Childhood Education and Care Reference Group
- ▶ NSW Government Early Childhood Education Advisory Group (ECAG)
- ▶ NSW Government Education Standards Authority's (NESA) Early Childhood Reference Group
- ▶ Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) National Workforce Strategy Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG)
- ▶ NSW Government Early Childhood Education Advisory Group (ECAG) Data Sub Committee
- ▶ NSW Government Early Childhood Education Advisory Group (ECAG) Preschool Reform Agreement subgroup
- ▶ Jobs and Skills Australia, Early Childhood Education and Care Capacity Study Steering Committee.

Communication to members:

- ▶ Members were kept informed via a weekly member news email which provided updates on relevant policy practice and advice.
- ▶ Amplify! articles were written to inform members and keep them up to date on the current inquiries and policy discussions affecting the sector. Articles included summaries and analysis of the ACCC interim report findings, multi-employer bargaining explainer and a history of wage setting in the ECEC sector.
- ▶ Weekly service updates were provided summarising outcomes from each multi-employer bargaining meeting, to support communication on the process to services and staff.



WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

In 2023 CELA contributed to advocacy and policy development through seven formal written submissions to both federal and state government inquiries.

- ▶ ANZSO Consultation on occupation titles
- ▶ Productivity Commission Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care
- ▶ Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Childcare Inquiry
- ▶ National Early Years Strategy
- ▶ Select Senate Committee on the Cost of Living
- ▶ IPART - Early Childhood Education and Care Affordability, Accessibility and Consumer Choice Inquiry
- ▶ IPART - Early Childhood Education and Care – Independent Market Monitoring Review

Senate Submissions:

- ▶ Select Senate Inquiry into the Cost of Living

Of these inquiries, the Productivity Commission will have the greatest impact on the future policy settings for the early education and care (ECEC) sector.

CELA's submission as part of this inquiry sets out a vision for ambitious reform which would put children and their needs at the heart of the system. The submission reflects CELA's five advocacy pillars and calls for the government to reset policy objectives to deliver a truly universal early childhood system for all children, including up to 30 hours or 3 days of free and guaranteed early education and care. In addition, we call for government funding to support a professionally paid and respected workforce, and support to ensure the growth and sustainability of community managed and small services.



BUILDING STRATEGIC GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIPS

- ▶ CELA CEO participated in the National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy Roundtable in Canberra, convened by Prime Minister & Cabinet.
- ▶ CELA hosted Minister for Education and Early Learning, Sarah Mitchell ahead of the NSW State Election. The Minister met with a representative group of CELA members to better understand how early education policy was being implemented.
- ▶ CELA CEO Michele Carnegie joined peaks bodies, unions and large providers of early education and care at the third Early Education Workforce Summit at Parliament House, convened by the United Workers Union.
- ▶ CELA CEO met with Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Tony Burke MP in a media event to launch the first national application for multi-employer bargaining in the early childhood education and care sector. The press conference was held at Woden Early Childhood Centre, a CELA member since 2005.
- ▶ Roundtable with Commonwealth Cabinet Members and applicants for Fair Work Commission to share experiences around workforce shortages and need for improved wages and conditions in the sector.
- ▶ Meetings with Commonwealth Minister for Early Childhood Education and Youth Dr Anne Aly.
- ▶ Meetings with then NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning Sarah Mitchell and newly elected NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Youth Prue Car.



CELA's CEO Michele Carnegie met with NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning Prue Car where they discussed the importance of investing in existing, new and aspiring ECEC leaders.



NOV 23: PARLIAMENT HOUSE ADVOCACY

CELA, CCC, UWU and sat down with Ministers, MPs and Senators from across the country to talk about the urgent need to raise wages in the early education and care sector.

COLLABORATION

- ▶ CELA collaborated with CCC in providing responses to the Terms of Reference for ACCC's Childcare Inquiry and Productivity Commission Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care.
- ▶ CELA, CCC, ACA and G8 Education lodged an application with the Fair Work Commission for the first ever national multi-employer agreement under the new Secure Jobs, Better Pay Act. As well as the application, collaboration with applicants has continued to maintain political momentum, such as the Roundtable with Cabinet members and media engagement.
- ▶ CELA CEO Michele Carnegie participated in consultations for Early Childhood Outcomes - Funding Assurance Framework for NSW Department of Education, and with PWC on the Draft National Vision for ECEC from a rural and remote perspective.
- ▶ CELA CEO co-hosted joint Canberra lobby day and press conference, in collaboration with CCC, ACA and United Workers Union.



COMMUNITY EARLY
LEARNING AUSTRALIA

Phone	(02) 8922 6444
Email	info@cela.org.au
Web	www.cela.org.au
Facebook	www.facebook.com/communityearlylearningaustralia
Twitter	@celaust